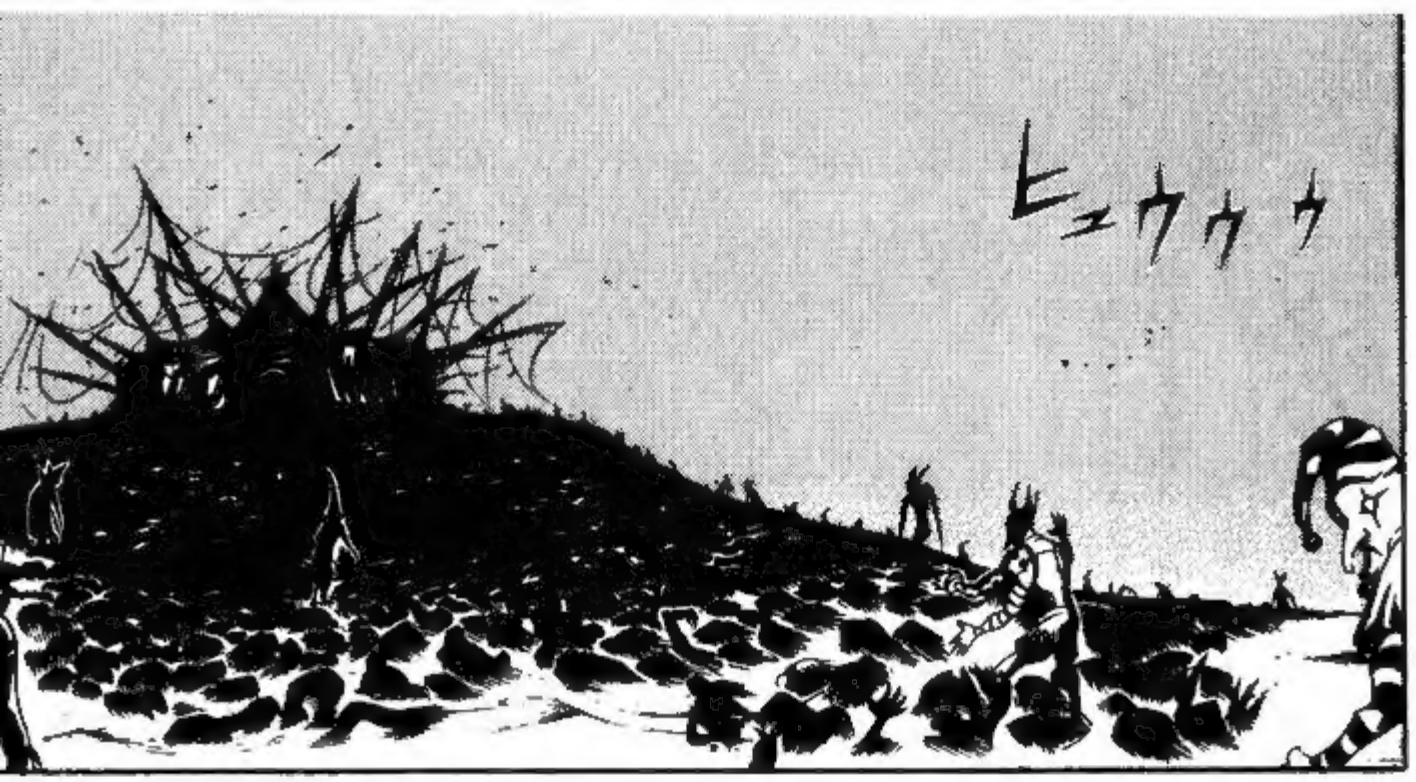


Act 20
The Four Doors

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THIS GAME REPRESENTS YOUR BEST OPTION.
AND YOUR COMRADES, WHO WERE SUPPOSED TO STORM OUR TENT, ARE ALL DEAD.
YOUR PLAN HAS BEEN LEAKED ...

NOW... WHAT WILL YOU DO?

2

HMPH... SO IT SEEMS.
OUR ONLY OPTION IS TO PLAY ALONG.

IT MUST BE A TRAP... WHAT SHOULD WE DO, LUCILLE ...?
HOBSON'S CHOICE, IN OTHER WORDS ...

AND WHOEVER REACHES THE DOLL FRANCINE ...
BE IT SEVERAL OF US, OR ONLY ONE...
WILL DESTROY HER.

KEH! INSTEAD OF DIVING INTO SOME POINTLESS TRAP...
I'D RATHER GO OUT FIGHTING RIGHT HERE!
DAHL, THAT IS NOT A GOOD PLAN.
AND WHY NOT, DMITRI ?!
ALL THAT WE NEED DO IS PLAY ALONG WITH THEIR GAME FOR A LITTLE LONGER ...

AND THE TIME OF THE MISSILE ATTACK... MIDNIGHT TONIGHT ...
WILL DRAW CLOSER!

HEY, STUPID, THEY ALREADY KNOW IT'S COMING!
WE SHIRO-GANE EXIST ONLY TO DEFEAT THEM.

IF THERE EXISTS THE SLIGHTEST CHANCE OF DOING THAT, IS IT NOT A RISK WORTH TAKING?
LET'S DO IT.

KEH! I DON'T NEED TO BE TOLD THAT BY THE LIKES OF YOU!
AREN'T WE HERE TO DESTROY THIS CIRCUS WITHOUT FAIL?

TAKE THAT! A MOUTH JUST AS DUMB AS WHAT YOU'RE SAYING!
BUT, I MEAN ...

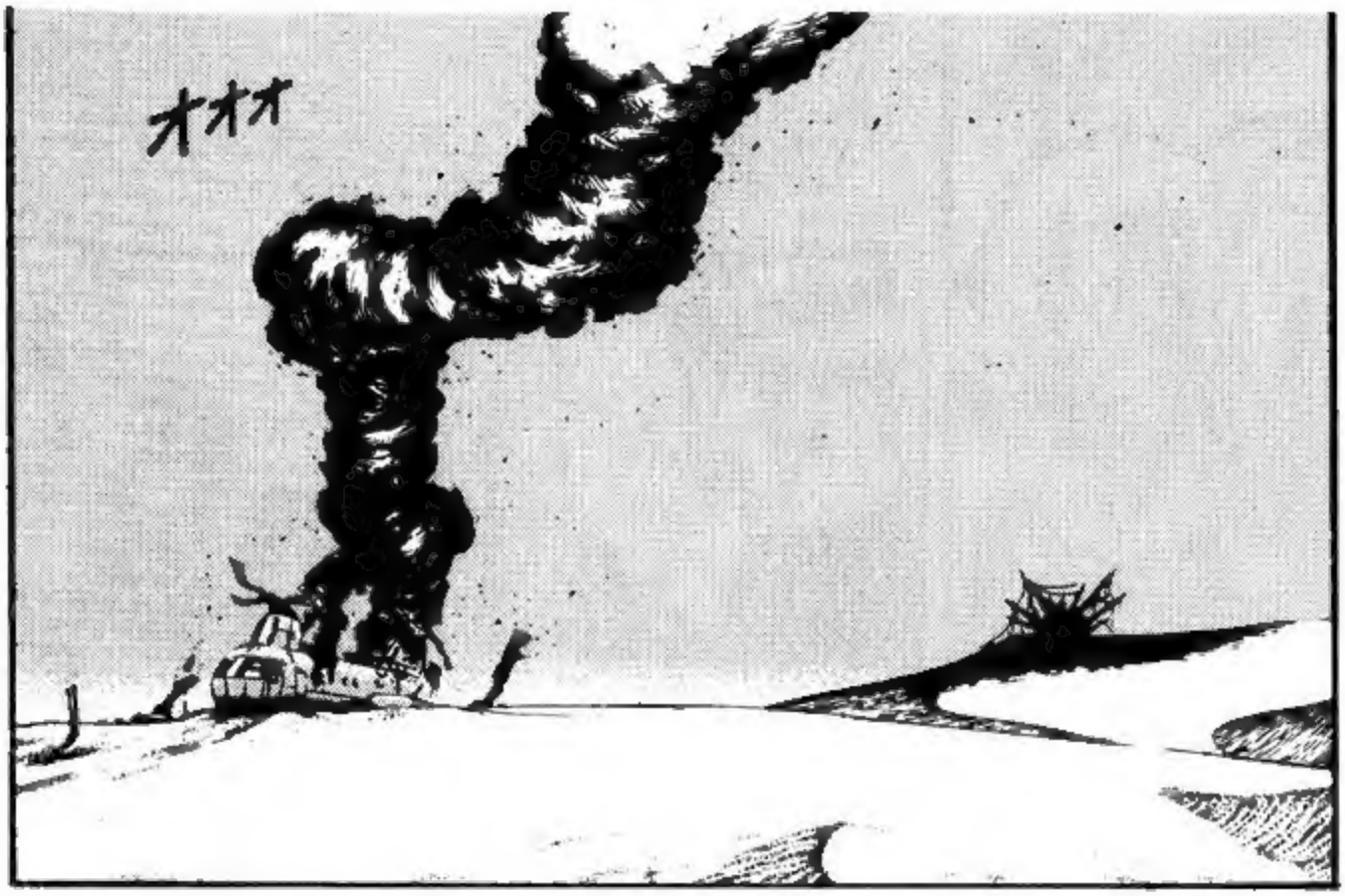
WHAT? DO YOU THINK I'M SCARED OF DYING OR SOME-THING?
MING-XIA... Y'KNOW, IF YOU WANNA LEAVE ...

OH... RIGHT.
BESIDES, WE'RE WAY OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DESERT. WHERE COULD I EVEN RUN TO?

AHAHA! IT'S JUST AS YOU SAY, YOUNG LADY!

I'M NOT GOING TO RUN AWAY NOW!
I MAY BE JUST A REGULAR HUMAN, BUT I'M HERE TO PUT MY LIFE ON THE LINE.

COM-MANDER FACE-LESS.
IT'S NOT POSSIBLE FOR US TO WITHDRAW EVEN IF WE WISH TO.
YOUR WORDS HAVE GIVEN ME THE WILL TO FIGHT.
THANK YOU.
I HAVE TAKEN YOU LIGHTLY, MISS MING-XIA. I MUST APOLOGIZE FOR THAT.
ALL WE HAVE EVER BEEN IS A GROUP OF PEOPLE WITH GRUDGES AGAINST THE DOLLS.
AND ALL WE CAN DO IS CAUSE THEM TROUBLE UNTIL THE VERY END.
OH, GOSH ...
IF YOU'RE READY, LUCILLE, LET'S BE OFF.
THIS TIME, IT'S OUR TURN ...
TO JOIN IN THEIR GAME.
5
...WELL, FIRST WE'LL HAVE TO DECIDE, WON'T WE...
WHO IS TO TAKE WHICH DOOR.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WE'RE QUITE SOME DISTANCE FROM THEIR TENT.
KHH ...
I MANAGED A CRASH LANDING, BUT...

AAA
IF I DON'T GET THE PACK-AGE OUT BEFORE THE FUSELAGE EXPLODES ...!
AND ON TOP OF THAT, IT'S IN FLAMES ...!
ARRGH! GET OUT OF THE WAY!
hh
hh

TCH... THE PACKAGE IS JAMMING SLIGHTLY AGAINST THE CEILING.
I WON'T BE ABLE TO GET IT OUTSIDE LIKE THIS.
HE'S DONE FOR, NOW.
HE OUGHT TO HAVE LEFT WELL ENOUGH ALONE. HE CAME ALONG...
DESPITE BEING A MERE HUMAN, AND ENDED UP WITH ZONAPHA SYNDROME.

IN THAT CASE ...
THE PILOTS ARE BOTH DEAD ...
ゴオオオ
NOT WITHOUT ANOTHER PERSON HOLDING THE HATCH OPEN FROM THE OUTSIDE ...
SIIIG
H
DAMN ...!
IF I DON'T HURRY ...!
ドド
8
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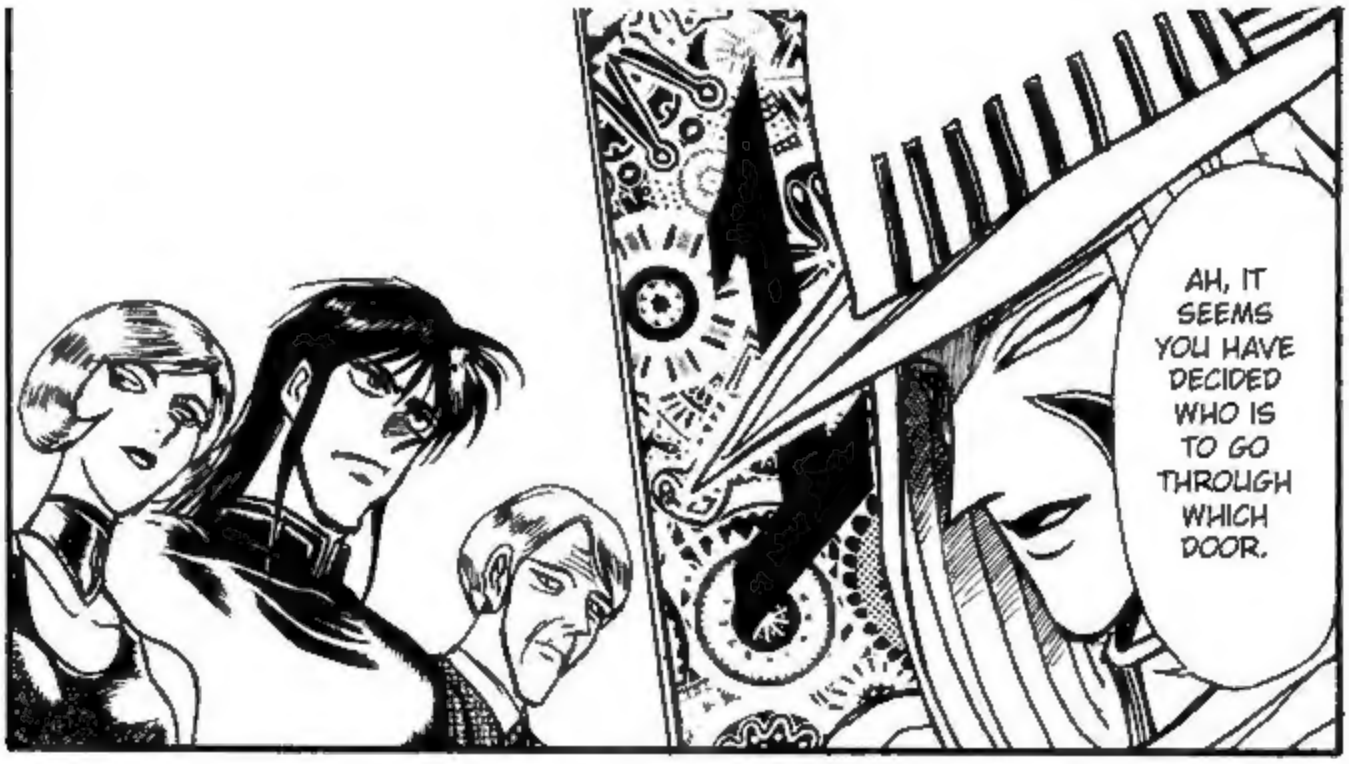
ドド


AH, IT SEEMS YOU HAVE DECIDED WHO IS TO GO THROUGH WHICH DOOR.

SO YOU'VE DIVIDED UP YOUR SHIROGANE-O. GOOD THINKING.

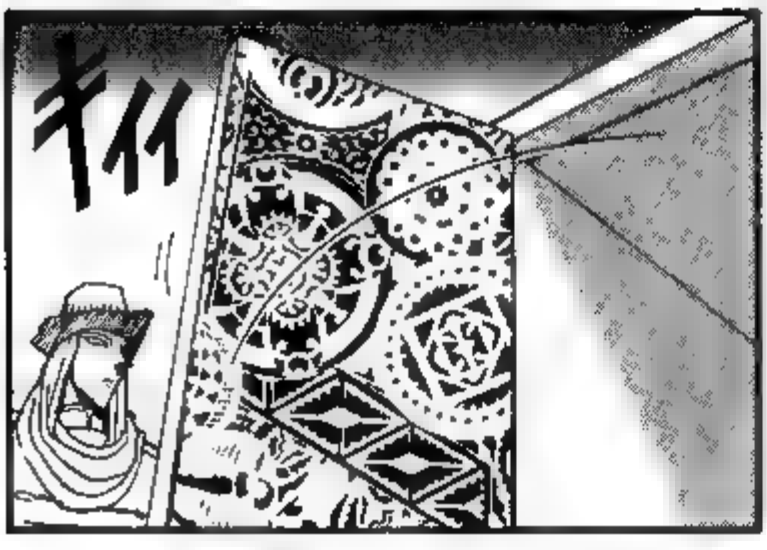
NO MATTER WHAT DOOR LADY FRANCINE WAITS BEHIND, SOMEONE IS SURE TO MEET WITH HER.

DO BE QUIET. WE ARE DECI-DING.
LUCILLE, AREN'T YOU AND THE REST COMING?
OH? WE'RE A BIT SHORT OVER HERE.

LUCILLE, I'M FINE WITH ANY OF THOSE DOORS.
AS AM I, MA-DAME.
SHH... DON'T MOVE, EITHER OF YOU.
.....
HUH ?!
OH... THE DOG.
とち
とち
HEY, LITTLE GUY, WHAT'S UP?
I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU AT ALL SINCE WE CAME IN HERE!

NO, MING-XIA, THIS DOG HAS BEEN WITH US THE WHOLE TIME.
ALWAYS IN THE VICINITY OF A CERTAIN PERSON.
...SO WHO IS THAT PERSON?
SNIIIFF
HMPH... IF YOU WANT TO GO, THEN GO.
THOUGH WHETHER AS A SERVANT, OR AS AN ENEMY, I CANNOT YET SAY.

AND WITH THAT, LET THE DOORS BE CAST OPEN ...!
とち とち
HMM, SO ONLY ONE OF YOU IS COMING?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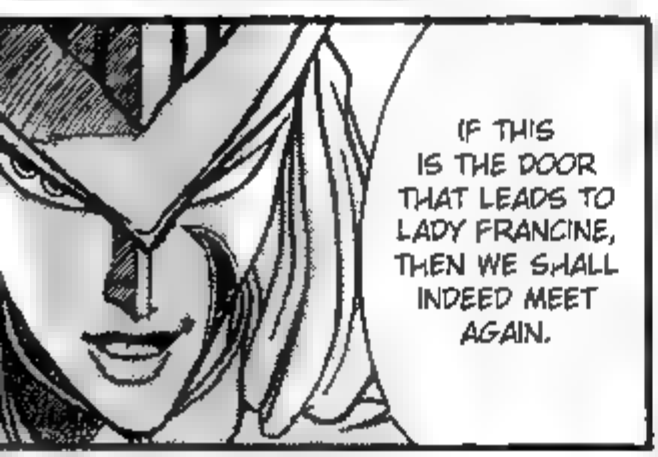
JUST WHAT AWAITS YOU BEHIND THESE DOORS ...?!
HAVE FUN ...!

11

I'VE BEEN WANTING TO MEET YOU AGAIN... WE DIDN'T GET TO SETTLE THINGS LAST TIME.


IF THIS IS THE DOOR THAT LEADS TO LADY FRANCINE, THEN WE SHALL INDEED MEET AGAIN.

IT'S BEEN SOME TIME, NARUMI.
SURE HAS, ARLEC-CHINO.

I SHALL ... WITH PLEA-SURE.

WELL, EITHER WAY, YOU WAIT FOR ME.

OH, THAT'S RIGHT. YOU TWO ARE JUST REGULAR SHIROGANE, AREN'T YOU.
YES... BUT, NARUMI, DOESN'T IT FEEL AS IF A BREEZE IS BLOWING UP FROM DOWN BELOW?
ヒュウウウ
IT'S PITCH BLACK ...

THAT'S RIGHT, I CAN SEE. JUST IN FRONT OF US ...
I'M MA LI-NA. JUST CALL ME LINA.

AS A SHI-ROGANE-O, YOU MUST HAVE EYES THAT CAN ADJUST TO ANY LEVEL OF LIGHT. SADLY, WE DO NOT ...
ERR ...?
WELL, SORRY!
I SUPPOSE YOU CAN'T SEE A THING WHEN IT'S THIS DARK.

IS A SPOOKY STAIR-CASE FIT TO LEAD US...
RIGHT ON DOWN INTO HELL.

.....

ﾌｯ

IF YA GOT THE CASH ...
I'LL... GIVE YOU A HAND ...
WH-WHAT'S WRONG, BUDDY...? YOU'RE IN TROUBLE, HUH...?
hi
hi
AS A RULE, THIS IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN ... BUT THERE'S NO OTHER OPTION.
BETTER YOUR HELP THAN NONE AT ALL.

SO HELP ME, ASHI-HANA.
I'LL SAVE YOUR LIFE.
ぼ
ピッ
OH, THAT'S NOT IT.
HERE IT IS.
WH-WHAT IN THE HELL ...

IT'S ALREADY STARTING TO EX-PLODE!
I'VE GOT THE DOOR FIXED DOWN! HURRY AND GET THE PACKAGE OUT!
ASHI-HANA! HURRY UP!
AND ON TOPPA THAT, THIS PACK-AGE ...
ONCE I DRANK THAT MONSTER'S BLOOD I FELT THE PAIN JUST WHOOSH AWAY...
TODAY'S JUST FULLA SURPRI-SES...
15

WITH THIS BIG CLUNKY CAR TO TRANS-PORT IT, HUH?
IT COMES COM-PLETE ...

17

HMPH! YOU TWO WERE SCARED, WERE YOU?
I WAS EXPECTING TO BE ATTACKED, BUT THAT DOESN'T SEEM TO BE THE R PLAN.
SO THE STAIRS WERE JUST A FAKEOUT?

CON-GRAT-ULA-TIONS!

——からくりサーカス 18 ・完——

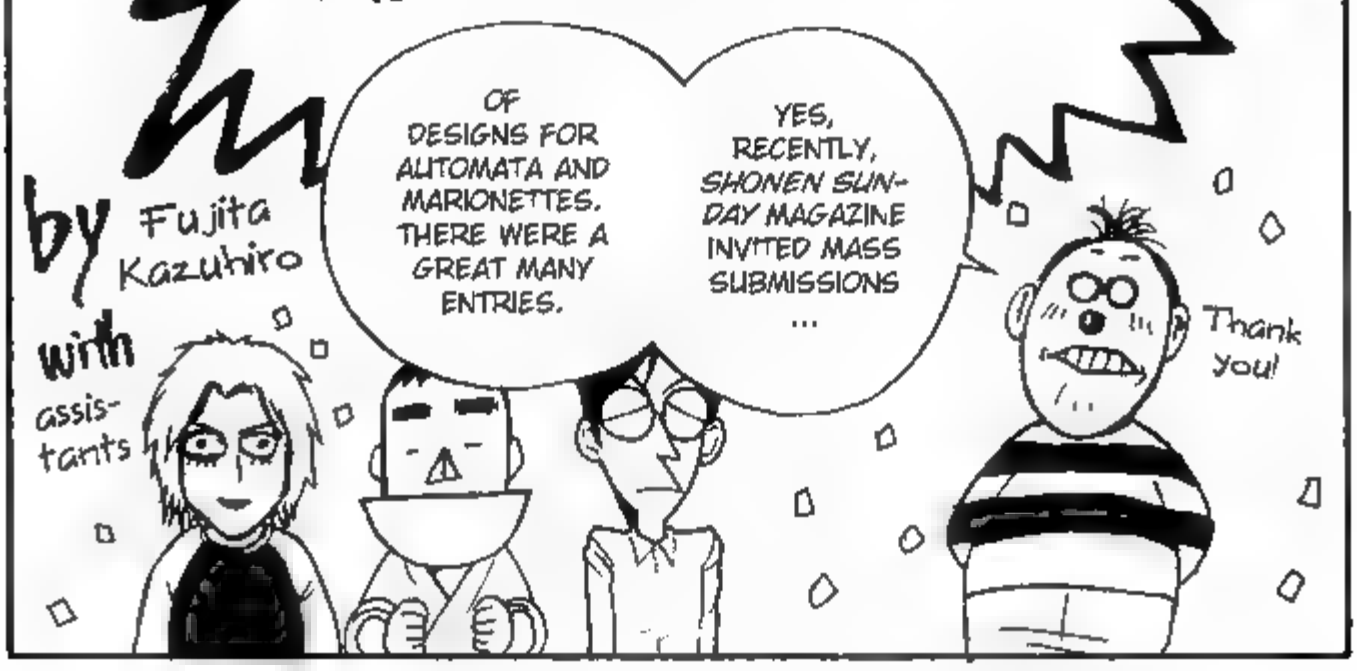
〈掲載・週刊少年サンデー平成13年6号より平成13年15号まで〉

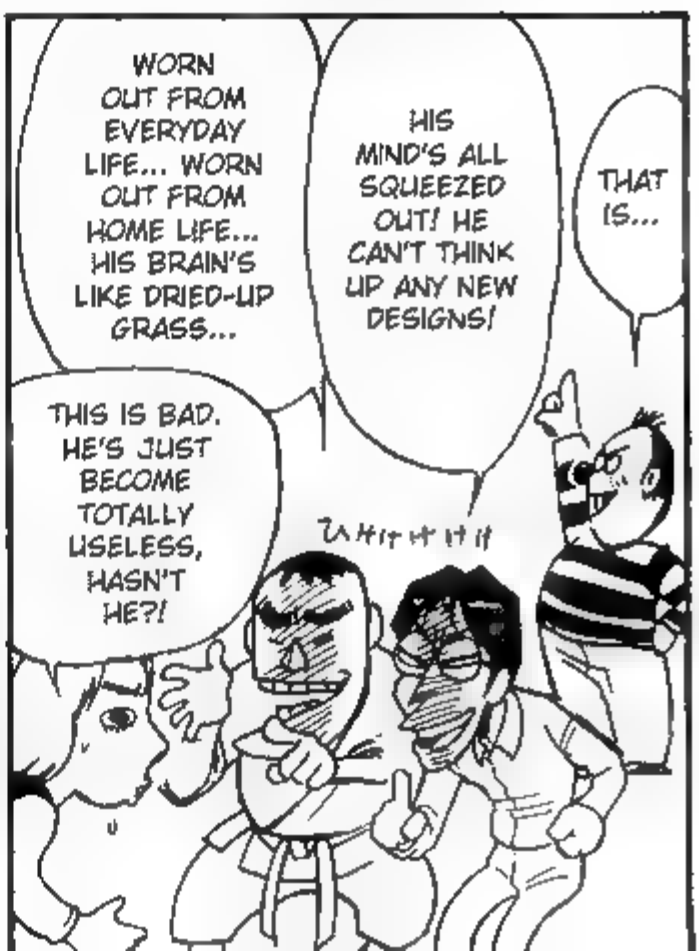
End of Volume Bonus Manga

Doll Design Workplace Mass Recruitment!

by Fujita Kazuhiro

with assistants


OF DESIGNS FOR AUTOMATA AND MARIONETTES. THERE WERE A GREAT MANY ENTRIES.
YES, RECENTLY, SHONEN SUNDAY MAGAZINE INVITED MASS SUBMISSIONS ...
Thank you!


WORN OUT FROM EVERYDAY LIFE... WORN OUT FROM HOME LIFE... HIS BRAIN'S LIKE DRIED-UP GRASS...
HIS MIND'S ALL SQUEEZED OUT! HE CAN'T THINK UP ANY NEW DESIGNS!
THAT IS...
THIS IS BAD. HE'S JUST BECOME TOTALLY USELESS, HASN'T HE?!
Whit it it it

AND WHY NOT?!
DON'T GO TO SLEEP!
I'LL HAVE IT IN A SEC-OND!
FUJITA-SAN, I FEAR YOU WILL NEVER RECOVER FROM SEEING MY INCREDIBLE DESIGN.
HA HA HA. OH, NO. ARE YOU REALLY SURE YOU WANT TO ASK ME?
CHIEF ASSIS-TANT DAN
SNEAK
かちゃ
CO-SLEEPY, A DOLL TO SLEEP WITH!!
AAAAAH
あああ
THE CHIEF ASSISTANT HATES SNAKES.
DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHAT I'M ASKING FOR ?!

HERE IT IS ...
I'VE POURED ALL I'VE GOT INTO THIS!!
バリ—バリ
I AM A MAN WITH CERTIFICATION IN BOTH ATHLETICS AND THE FINE ARTS!
DAN-SAN, YOU CLEARLY KNOW NOTHING ABOUT DOLLS!!
WHAT EVEN WAS THAT?!
NICK
THE NICKY #1!!
Speed: 10,000 km/h
Lifting power: 500,000,000 tons
DO YOU EVEN READ KARAKURI CIRCUS?!
NICK HATES ASPARAGUS.

HA HA HA, MY SENPAI CAME UP WITH SUCH FUNNY IDEAS.
AS FOR ME, I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING MUCH ...!
WHAT'RE YOU UP TO, NEWBIE ...?!
JOHNNY
SEE THAT?
HOW DO YOU LIKE THAT? HE CAME UP WITH THIS EVEN THOUGH HE'S JUST A ROOKIE. AND YOU TWO CAN'T EVEN MATCH THAT?!
not bad...
It's kinda...
NOW TO INK IT!
EHEHEH... IT WAS AN UTTER FAILURE.
Gwaah
IT STILL IS!

のし
のし
I'LL TAKE YOU ON WITH DOLLS I'VE THOUGHT UP MYSELF!
Sigh!
むーん
OH, YOU'VE ALL LET ME DOWN ...
ガガガガガ
LIKE DRIED-UP GRASS...
WORN OUT FROM EVERYDAY LIFE... WORN OUT FROM HOME LIFE...
boo hoo ...
YOU USED OURS !!

END

からくりサーカス⑱

少年サンデーコミックス

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The characters for Lina's name
are 馬 麗娜 (Mǎ Lìnà).

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Thanks to Judash137 on the mangafox forums for removing the Japanese text, and to the anonymous person who tipped me off to that!

Any group with more experience or skill is welcome to take over at any time or to redo chapters I have already done if they are below the quality that this series deserves.